

# **The Equine Interstate Movement Permit Program**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Equine Interstate Movement Permit Program or “Passport Program”?**

This is a cooperative, voluntary program developed by participating states in the Southeast designed to ease the health certificate requirements for certain horses that move interstate. It is recognized only among those participating states.

### **Is this a new program?**

No. In the past, other states throughout the country have entered into regional agreements with varying provisions for participation. The Southern Animal Health Association, which is a collection of 14 southeastern states, began a voluntary program that first began in January, 2004. Tennessee only recently passed rules that enabled us to join this program effective January, 2006.

### **What were the requirements prior to these passport programs for horses to move across state lines?**

Most states have always required a valid health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection) along with a current negative test for Equine Infectious Anemia (Coggins test). In order to be legal, these documents are still required for Tennessee horse owners to transport their horses to non-participating states. By definition, a health certificate is only valid for 30 days from the date of examination of the horse.

### **Why this program? What is the value of this to the horse owner?**

This program recognizes the higher health status provided by many horse owners that participate in trail rides, fairs and exhibitions. On that basis, participating states will waive the requirement to obtain a health certificate every 30 days for entry into their state, provided the horses have obtained an equine “passport” issued by regulatory authorities in their home state. Horse owners using this program are only required to obtain the passport every 6 months, and are not subject the costs of obtaining a health certificate every 30 days.

**Is there a benefit for the state regulatory authorities?**

As mentioned above, states recognize that most horse owners entering these events are very conscientious regarding providing appropriate veterinary care for their animal. In recognition, relaxing the health certificate decreases the economic impact to the horse owner. In turn, regulatory authorities obtain more accurate identification for the individual animal for which the passport is issued. In almost every instance, digital photographs or unique identifier microchips are far superior than a written description or drawing, which most horses have traveled legally on in the past.

**Why are horses part of the National Animal Identification System that requires microchipping or other forms of identification in my horse?**

The primary purpose of a national identification system is to address animal health emergencies. The national program is being developed to address all livestock groups, including horses. While the initial focus has been on food livestock, other industry groups are expected to develop their own national identification plan for future participation. Horses are susceptible to several diseases which are foreign to the United States and would possibly be a cause for concern in regard to human and horse health. For instance, Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis does not currently exist in the United States, and if introduced, could have health implications for horses moving either intra or interstate. Likewise, “glanders” is a bacterial disease that infects horses and people. In fact, this agent has been used as a biological weapon in the past.

**Does this mean I’m going to have to get an eartag in my horse?**

No. The equine species working group has made several recommendations regarding identification methods for use in horses. Unique lip tattoo, such as that issued by a breed registry, or microchipping are two possible identification methods. New technologies are also being pursued and researched and may be available in the future. Some microchips currently being offered can also encode additional health information, such as vaccination records. Microchip identification may also assist regulatory authorities in identifying stolen animals, and possibly enabling their return to the rightful owners. For more information regarding the national animal identification program and the inclusion of horses visit the American Horse Council webpage at [www.horsecouncil.org](http://www.horsecouncil.org).

**Are there any special provisions of the program that I should be aware of?**

Yes. Some states have additional requirements as part of their participation in the program. These are currently listed on the “passport” web page.

**How do I obtain an equine passport?**

Application forms and further details can be obtained at TDA's webpage at: <http://www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/regulate/animals/passport.html>.

In order to obtain a passport, complete the application form, arrange for an initial health examination for your horse on which a health certificate can be issued, and insure that your current EIA test (Coggins test) is valid for the entire six month period that you are seeking a passport for. Each of these forms should be submitted to your veterinarian for inclusion in the application that your veterinarian will forward to our office. Please obtain your passport well in advance of any planned out-of-state trips in order to allow adequate time for processing the application and return.

**How much does it cost?**

Currently, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture does not charge for issuing a passport. There will be associated costs for the health examination and health certificate along with any required EIA testing to be performed on the horse. Please visit with your veterinarian regarding costs for the services.